SUMMARY

A general description is given of conditions in a Siamese rice village, 1952-54, as they relate to food supply and food habits. Activities at various seasons of the year are described. The heavy work seasons occurred during transplanting and harvest. In the dry season, many ceremonials and festivals were held in which food played an important role. Such occasions provided opportunity to "make merit" and add to one's prestige as did the regular offering of food to the priests, throughout the year. The relatively large financial obligations undertaken by those sponsoring ceremonies was a major factor in the economy of the village.

Food was mostly home produced and an important factor in the standard of living was the number of productive hands available. Rice was the first essential for any meal. Home milled rice was used, even in part, only by a minority of households. Fish, fresh or preserved, was the food next in importance to rice. Use of flesh foods other than fish was probably inhibited by Buddhist tenets which prohibit the taking of life, but some poultry, oxen, and other flesh foods were used. Nearly all of the families in Bang Chan raised chickens, and some raised ducks, but about 3/5 of all eggs produced were sold. Every family had some sort of kitchen garden, including banana trees and other plants, but spices and chili were much more commonly grown than vegetables and fruit. Swamp cabbage, the green leafy vegetable used most often, grew wild in the canals. A calendar of fresh foods commonly used in Bang Chan is presented.

Cash expenditures for food were small. When canals were navigable, boat venders brought produce and during the busy work seasons farmers often bought fish as well as the usual foods: onions, garlic, limes, cocomut, palm sugar and small amounts of vegetables.

Many households increased their income by the sale of eggs, vegetables gathered from the canal and other items. Culture of tilapia and mushrooms, begun during the period of study, was undertaken by a considerable number of farmers between 1953 and 1955. Both enterprises were apparently regarded primarily as a supplementary source of cash rather than as a means of improving the home food supply, and both efforts had been largely if not entirely abandoned by 1957.

Preparation of some typical dishes, meal service and techniques of eating are described. For adults, two meals a day were usual, except during the busy work seasons when a third meal might be eaten. Menus were similar for all. Two observations from records of school children were 1) that over 50% of them ate snacks, many of which were bought from venders on the school grounds. Sweets and fruit were the